



QUARTERLY UPDATE

June 2011

Enhancing the Quality of Postnatal Care in Rural East Africa

The first six weeks after birth (called the 'postnatal' period), are critical to infants and mothers in rural areas of East and Southern Africa, since this is when many babies and mothers die. A 2008 assessment conducted by the Regional Center for Quality of Health Care (RCQHC) exposed a critical weakness in postnatal care in this region. Empowered by its mandate to improve the quality of health care in Africa, RCQHC laid out a plan to improve postnatal care practices in communities across countries in the East African region.

To safeguard lives, quality postnatal care should be provided to all mothers and newborns. Examples of accepted postnatal baby care include immediate and exclusive breastfeeding, keeping the baby warm, ensuring that the baby's umbilical cord area is kept clean until the cord dries and falls off, and completing a series of internationally accepted immunizations. New mothers require rest, proper nutrition, and family planning guidance. The mother and baby should sleep under an insecticide treated bed net to protect against malaria, get tested and if applicable, treated and counseled for HIV/AIDS. Health providers and mothers must also remain vigilant for any danger signs such as coughing, high fever or pale or lackluster eyes in the baby as well as excessive bleeding in the mother.

Based on the assessment findings, RCQHC developed a draft *Community Based Postnatal Care Reference Handbook* with USAID's support, to help community based health providers deliver quality services and educate care providers (often mothers or family members) about these practices. Counseling cards with simple drawings from within the countries were used as tools for demonstrating positive postnatal practices to new or expectant mothers or family members.

In 2010, 58 community health workers from Uganda and Kenya (29 females and 29 males), were trained on the provision of community-based postnatal care using the *Handbook*. Interviews with these health workers confirmed an increased understanding of and confidence in their ability to promote improved postnatal care.

Community health workers also appreciated the emphasis given to making regular home visits as a way of reducing illness and death among mothers and children.

Daisy, a community health worker from Uganda, shared what she learned during the training, saying, "*Younger mothers didn't know how to breastfeed properly and were giving the baby*

external food... Some refused to breast feed because they think it causes the breasts to sag and so preferred bottled milk."

Ruth Asenahabi, a community health worker from Kenya, commented, "*They (home visits) were important as the mothers were able to breastfeed their babies and also to eat nutritious food leading to improved health of both mothers and children."*

Mothers expressed a willingness to heed the advice of their community health workers while demonstrating potentially life-saving behavior change. Ruth Khatioli, a mother from Kenya, said, "*The first thing I should do when I deliver is to put the baby on my breast because the first milk has protective properties...doing this helps to stop the mother from bleeding excessively. This was new information for me because when I deliver at home I usually rest and allow the baby to rest for even two days before I start breastfeeding."*

RCQHC's assessment work on the state of postnatal care in the region and its subsequent development of a draft Postnatal Care Handbook helped catalyze discussion within and between national Ministries of Health in the region about the importance of changing behavior by improving the quality of postnatal care through community health workers in East Africa.

After years of RCQHC advocacy efforts on this important issue including promoting best practices learned from Ethiopia, four countries--Kenya, Southern Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda-- had by 2011 all moved to integrate post natal care into their training manuals and implementation guidelines for community health workers. This represents a large step forward for improving the health of women and babies in East and Southern Africa.



Community Health Worker in Kenya counsels a young mother about positive postnatal care practices for her six week old daughter. Photo: RCQHC



USAID Djibouti Representative Honored for Supporting Djiboutian Development Sectors

The Prime Minister of Djibouti, Dileita Mohamed Dileita, awarded USAID/Djibouti Representative Stephanie Funk with the Officer of the National Order award on May 4 in recognition of all her contributions since 2008 to health, education, democracy and governance development sectors in Djibouti. Those in attendance included Djibouti's General Secretary, Ministry of Health

Left to right: USAID/Djibouti Representative, Stephanie Funk; and Prime Minister, Dileita Mohamed Dileita at the award ceremony.
Photo: USAID/Djibouti

(MOH), Dr. Salah Banoita; U.S. Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission, Paul Pometto; MOH key personnel, and USAID/Djibouti staff.

New Skills Spur Entrepreneurial Spirit, Improved Well Being

Emmanuel Ntahombaye lives on a hillside in Burundi. His family makes its living from agriculture and by raising livestock. In 2009 Emmanuel participated in a two week training session for Lead Farmers/Community Veterinary Agents facilitated by USAID's Burundi Agribusiness Program. He learned how to identify and treat diseases affecting Burundi's cattle and was given instruments used in veterinary care. Today, Emmanuel treats his and his neighbors' animals.

Since 2008, USAID's Burundi Agribusiness program has been helping to expand and diversify rural economic opportunities in Burundi through technical, trading and marketing support to Burundi's coffee, horticulture and dairy sectors. The project has provided livelihood-enhancing assistance to approximately 61,607 farming households.

Emmanuel owns two improved race dairy cattle that collectively produce 20 litres of milk per day. Emmanuel appreciates their productivity but explains that his cattle are sensitive to local diseases that can require costly veterinary care. But Emmanuel no longer has to travel eight kilometers to the commune to find a veterinarian. He now saves an average eight dollars a month that he used to spend on veterinary care. He also earns almost double that by providing monthly veterinary treatment for his neighbor's cattle. He can afford the primary and secondary school fees for his five children.



Emmanuel Ntahombaye and his wife Nshimirimana Emerentienne with their healthy cow.

Photo: DAI

Emmanuel's wife, Nshimirimana Emerentienne says, "The regular monitoring of our cattle's health is reassuring because when they are in good health, they produce an adequate supply of manure."



Scholastic Ntirampeba and Gaspard Bandyatuyaga, both farmers, participated in veterinary care training.

Photo: DAI

Emmanuel sums it up by saying, "In addition to an improved economic status, I've risen in the social hierarchy because the neighbors see that I have a useful skill."

Farmers Scholastic Ntirampeba and Gaspard Bandyatuyaga also took the veterinary care training. They have since opened a veterinary pharmacy and provide veterinary medicines to their neighbors. Their stock alone is worth \$400 and the pharmacy nets a healthy profit.

Siridi Bangurambona is Scholastic's neighbor. He admits to having received advice from Scholastic for his dairy enterprise. Before, he let his cattle range free and spent a great deal on veterinary care. Scholastic suggested that Siridi improve his stable and control the feed provided to his animals.

Today Siridi's daily milk production has increased from two to seven litres and his animals are healthier than when they ranged free.

New Regional Feed the Future Strategy to Help Increase Trade Flows of Staple Foods

USAID/East Africa's 2011-2015 Feed the Future Strategy was approved by an inter-agency team in Washington in April. The strategy presents the framework and core investment areas for a regional program working with African regional institutions, USAID country missions, private sector trade organizations, and other partners. It contributes to the objectives of the Africa-led Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program (CAADP) and the Millennium Development Goal of halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and suffering from hunger by 2015. The strategy was developed in consultation with regional partner organizations and colleagues in USAID's Bureau for Food Security, USAID Feed the Future focus missions in East Africa, the State Department, U.S. Department of Agriculture and other agencies.

This strategy addresses regional issues and builds on the Mission's comparative advantage to identify challenges that can be tackled at the regional level and that will add value to the national CAADP investment plans and USAID country strategies. *The goal is **Increased Access, Availability, and Utilization of African-grown staple foods in Regionally Integrated Markets on the Northern and Central Corridors** with three organizational areas explained in the next section.*

- **Transformational Focus Area: Increase Trade Flows of Staple Foods in the Region.** Regional investments will support integrated national and regional markets; improved regional access to technologies and inputs; and increased private sector investment in regional agriculture and nutrition-related activities for four value chains and at six border posts:

Value Chains

- * Staple grains, with a focus on maize
- * Beans and other pulses
- * Livestock (harmonized standards and livestock health)
- * Horticultural crops traded within the region

Border Posts

- * Malaba (Kenya/Uganda)
- * Busia (Kenya/Uganda)
- * Gatuna (Uganda/Rwanda)
- * Nimule (Uganda/South Sudan)
- * Namanga (Kenya/Tanzania)
- * Tunduma/Nakonde (Tanzania/Zambia)

New Regional Feed the Future Strategy to Help Increase Trade Flows of Staple Foods

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Hilda Kuwete, member and officer of the Mbingu farmer association in Kilombero District, Tanzania, proudly displays stacked bags of her Asili (meaning Kilombero 'original') variety rice paddy. Hilda is storing her grain in a warehouse that has been renovated with assistance of USAID.
Photo: USAID/COMPETE

- **Support Area: Support Strategic Partnerships with African Regional Institutions.** USAID/East Africa will help build the capacity of African partners to impact the smallholder farmer through improved policies, influence on national level institutions, availability of science, technology and knowledge, increased trade flows, and increased private sector investment.
- **Support Area: Provide Regional Services.** The regional team will convene regional consultations and provide technical services to the USAID missions in the focus countries, and to both regional and bilateral partner organizations, to build coordination and synergies.

The implementation of this strategy will improve regional food security and nutrition by building structured regional markets that will significantly expand opportunities along selected staple food value chains for smallholder farmers, farmers' organizations, traders, storage and warehouse operators, processing firms, and transporters. Increased volume and value of intra-regional trade will have a direct impact on expanded access, availability, and utilization of the prioritized staple foods.

Somaliland — Open for Business

Early in May, USAID/EA's *Partnership for Economic Growth* set up shop within Somaliland. The new program is supporting the Somali people to improve economic growth and livelihoods. Getting acquainted with the city of Hargeisa has been an interesting experience for USAID's implementing partners. Local government authorities welcomed meeting with the team; formal meetings take place at ministries, but business is as likely to happen over coffee or dinner. It is not hard to meet local entrepreneurs, but it is difficult to alleviate their "value chain and assessment fatigue" in order to secure their cooperation. NGO registration takes three weeks, while opening a bank account takes only one day and transactions happen immediately – money is wired into the account, deposits are made and checks are written.

Finding and setting up an office is not difficult. Mobile phone networks are relatively efficient, though the internet is often slow and subject to outages. Finding cars and drivers at reasonable daily rates is easy and fast. Fast, however, is not the word to describe traffic -- during rush hours when cars, buses, donkey carts, pedestrians, and livestock

USAID and COMESA Establish Fourth Trade Information Desk for Great Lakes Region Traders

In March, USAID/EA and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) established a Trade Information Desk at the Kasumbalesa border post on the Zambian side of the Zambia/Democratic Republic of Congo border. The facility was donated by the Copper-belt Cross Border Traders Association and equipped with computers, printer, scanner and a copy machine provided by USAID/EA.

The launch was attended by government officials from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zambia, representatives of COMESA and USAID, Customs Officials and Cross Border Trader Association representatives.

Trade Information Desks facilitate information about cross border trade. Traders receive advice about transport costs, exchange rates, how to pay immigration and customs duties or claim duty exemption, or where to seek temporary accommodation in the border areas.

In 2006 COMESA decided to support Trade Information Desks to enhance understanding of trade flows in the Great Lakes Region and to promote cross-border trade as a post conflict reconstruction strategy. USAID supports this effort through its Trading for Peace initiative. Activities foster stability in the Great Lakes region by reducing cross-border barriers to trade and improving trade practices.

USAID and COMESA established the first Trade Information Desk in January 2009 on the DRC side of Kasumbalesa. The Zambian and DRC Governments have welcomed the creation of these desks as important steps towards regional integration.

Two more Trade Information Desks were established on the border between DRC (in Goma) and Rwanda (in Rubavu) in 2010. These border posts have also met with the full support of the trading community.

As a sign of the importance of these Trade Information Desks, approximately 2,018 individuals sought information at the Kasumbalesa, DRC, Goma and Rubavu Trade Information Desks between January 2010 and February 2011. More than 50% of these were female traders.

compete for limited road space. Though there are no security checkpoints around the city, international organizations remain vigilant regarding security, and offices have 24-hour guards.



USAID partners meet with liquid natural gas vendors. USAID's Partnership for Economic Growth is helping Somalis to identify alternative energy sources to reduce their reliance on charcoal.